

REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

ASEPTIC SURGICAL TECHNIQUE, with Especial Reference to Gynæcological Operations, together with Notes on the Technique employed in certain Supplementary Procedures. By HUNTER ROBB, M.D. Illustrated with twenty-five plates and forty-seven figures. Crown 8vo. 264 pages. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1894.

PETIT MANUEL D'ANTISEPSIE ET D'ASEPSIE CHIRURGICALES. Par FELIX TERRIER ET M. PERAIRE. Seventy illustrations. 12mo. 186 pages. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1893.

ANLEITUNG ZUR ASEPTISCHEN WUND BEHANDLUNG. Von Dr. C. SCHIMMELBUSCH. Second Edition. 12mo. 210 pages; thirty-six illustrations. Berlin: August Hirschwald, 1893,

Few, if any, of the many works devoted to surgery give as full and detailed a description of modern aseptic surgical technique as the importance of the subject demands, and these small volumes, which aim to supply this need, will doubtless prove of great value to those of the profession who have occasion to do surgical operations. That this lack of specific directions in the more elaborate treatises on surgery is not confined to our own literature is proved by the fact that two other works, very similar in their scope to Dr. Robb's, have appeared within the past year, the one in French, the other in German. All of the writers are men of experience as practical operators and as laboratory investigators. A comparison of the three books is not without interest.

In both of the foreign volumes the opening chapters are devoted to a brief account of the origin of antiseptis, and of the original methods and dressings of Sir Joseph Lister; neither devotes much

attention to the consideration of the germs themselves, which are now known to be the chief factors in the production of diseases dependent upon wound infection. Robb neglects the historical side of the subject, but begins his book by emphasizing the necessity to the surgeon of a bacteriological training. He describes all of the micro-organisms involved in the various septic processes; gives their biological characteristics, and the clinical phenomenon which each produce; finally, a colored plate represents their chief forms.

Now that the various theories as to technique are controlled by bacteriological experiments, the ground upon which modern surgery is built is becoming more and more firm. Even in the few months that have elapsed since the French and German books appeared there have been many advances. Terrier gives to antisepsis a prominent position; Schimmelbusch, whose book appeared a few months later, favors asepsis, though antisepsis is still considered to be very important; Robb, armed with the results of still more recent investigations, is iconoclastic in his treatment of the various antiseptic idols,—many he destroys utterly, others are battered and bruised, even corrosive sublimate totters upon its pedestal. Asepsis is for the present the dominant power.

The three authors differ somewhat in the stress laid upon the means used to secure the best surgical results, although the difference is one of degree and not of kind. Each book has points of superiority over the others. Terrier gives the best description of filters, and of dry and moist heat sterilizers. The application of antisepsis and of asepsis to various regions of the body, such as the pharynx, the stomach, and the intestines, is also given by the French authority alone. Chapters devoted to the bibliography of the subject, and to the application of asepsis in first aid to the injured are peculiar to the book of Schimmelbusch. All give definite instructions concerning the operating room, its equipment, the corps of assistants, and their duties, and the technique of actual operations; all are valuable books to use as guides. When, however, the three books are compared, the difference is at once apparent. The French and German books will

aid one in securing a comprehensive knowledge of the subject, but to the general practitioner in any country who wishes to have the theory stated concisely and the actual working details of practice fully described, Robb's book is by far the most valuable.

Considered more in detail, the characteristic features of the book by the American author are as follows: The principles of sterilization and their practical application to dressings, suture material, ligatures, instruments, and to the human skin are given in full. The many seemingly unimportant items which are given are really as valuable as anything in the book. Ligatures are still bitten off and the needles, after they are threaded, are held between the lips till used, blankets are adjusted, and the pocket handkerchief used during the progress of an important operation and by surgeons who pride themselves upon their technical accuracy, and who report the operation in the journals with the statement that "strict asepsis was observed." Similar flaws in technique are of daily occurrence in nearly every operating room, and the fact cannot be dwelt upon too often.

It is greatly to be regretted that, almost without exception, the preparations described and the operations performed relate to the pelvic disorders of women. For an operator who limits his sphere of activity to this class of cases, this is perhaps an advantage, but to a surgeon and not a mere gynæcologist the occasional mention of some other part of the body would give the work an added value.

Post-operative cares, including the management of diet, vomiting, rectal feeding, shock, the removal of stitches, dressings, and similar topics are fully described.

• "Operations in the country, in private houses, or in other places where the technique must necessarily be more or less imperfect," is the title of a chapter full of good suggestions as to the armamentarium, improvised operating rooms, and modifications in technique required by circumstances.

With this the consideration of the technique of aseptic surgery ends. The four additional chapters are connected with the bulk of the work by a very slender pedicle, it is true, but give an added

weight to the subject. One is devoted to anæsthesia as an aid to diagnosis in obscure conditions of the pelvic organs.

Notes upon bacteriological and clinical examinations in surgery and gynæcology form another chapter. "Although for an intelligent knowledge, the text-books devoted especially to this science must be consulted, it has, nevertheless, been thought worth while to devote a few paragraphs here to the subject of the outfit which will be required for the ordinary work of the investigating surgeon, and at the same time to refer briefly to some practical points which may be of service."

The examination of the interior of the female bladder and the catheterization of the ureters are carefully described. Thanks to Dr. Kelly, these procedures are now so simplified that the directions here given should enable any one to use this important aid to diagnosis.

The closing chapter is devoted to the subject of pathological examinations, and is an able plea for the more extended use of the microscope and the microtome as aids to surgical progress. The study of gross specimens obtained from operations and from the autopsy table is also strongly recommended.

The publishers deserve a share in the hearty commendation which Dr. Robb's book merits, for the printing, plates, and paper are all excellent.

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